

Board of Ada County Commissioners

Role of Office

The roles and duties of County Commissioners are numerous and varied across the United States. Counties are complex organizations, operating literally dozens of distinct business functions, governed by elected officials, and overseen by a Commission that acts as the executive, legislative and the judicial branch of government at various times. The job of Commissioner is, therefore, necessarily complex. Commissioners must understand each level of their responsibility to effectively lead a county.

The Board of Commissioners not only sets policy, but is also responsible for its implementation. Commissioners are the chief executives of the county organization. The executive role of a Commissioner varies greatly from county to county. The role may be determined by prior executive experience, or it might be tailored to the particular circumstances in the county. It may be defined by the existing commissioners or by historical tradition.

Staff members work with the Commissioners and the other elected and appointed officials, to carry out the policy directions of the Board, to supervise departments under the Board and to coordinate the work of the other officials and staff.

Powers of the Board of Commissioners include: Budgeting and appropriation of funds for all county activities; making and enforcing civil and criminal resolutions and ordinances not in conflict with state law, including those for land use and building construction; supporting and implementing state and federal mandates; executive oversight of all appointed county agencies; construction and maintenance of public buildings; fixing the tax levies for the county and its subordinate jurisdictions; authorizing payments owed by the county and auditing all officers having control of county monies; managing county property and county funds; and prosecuting and defending all actions for and against the county.

Commissioners are authorized and required to make policy for the county. Policy-making means defining high-level goals and long-range outcomes for county government. This includes choosing the direction, the ways and the means to achieve those outcomes, and to guide the decision making process leading to them.